

EASTERN CONGO INITIATIVE

FOUNDER

BEN AFFLECK

Actor, Writer, Director & Advocate



In addition to a successful career as an actor, writer and director, Ben Affleck is also a passionate advocate and philanthropist.

In March 2010, Ben founded the Eastern Congo Initiative (ECI), an advocacy and grant-making initiative with the mission of helping the Congolese people support local community-based approaches that create a sustainable and successful society in the long-troubled region. ECI is the first U.S. based advocacy and grant-making initiative

wholly focused on working with and for the people of eastern Congo.

Since 2007, Ben has made multiple trips to Africa, with a focus on eastern Congo. He has focused on understanding the causes and consequences of conflict on the continent, and learning about African solutions to the problems affecting the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In May 2008, a film crew from ABC's Nightline joined Ben on a trip to the DRC, meeting with a diverse set of individuals – including President Joseph Kabila; former armed group leader Laurent Nkunda; refugees and internally displaced people; former child soldiers; and leaders from local and international NGOs, among others – to gather a range of viewpoints on the issues in the region. Nightline produced full episode narrated by Ben about the trip; it aired in June 2008.

Ben participated in the National Democratic Institute's International Leaders Forum on global poverty at the Democratic National Convention in August 2008, with panelists including former senator Tom Daschle and former secretary of state Madeline Albright. Ben shared some of his experiences in Africa with the group, and discussed the benefits of refocusing the depictions of the continent, and Africans, towards the positive change taking place in their countries.

In late 2008, he directed a short film and public service announcement, "Gimme Shelter," about the humanitarian crisis in the DRC. The film was utilized as part of the UNHCR's international campaign to aid those displaced by violence.

In addition to extensive travel throughout the DRC, Ben's learning and advocacy trips have taken him to Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Republic of Congo, Sudan and Zanzibar. He is a longtime political activist and strong supporter of many charitable organizations, such as Feeding America, A-T Children's Project, and the Jimmy Fund.

Ben first came to prominence in 1997 with the acclaimed "Good Will Hunting," which he starred in and co-wrote with Matt Damon. For their work, they won an Academy Award® for Best Original Screenplay, as well as the Golden Globe Award and Humanitas Prize. He also received the 2007 Best Directorial Debut award from the National Board of Review for "Gone Baby Gone."

Ben went on to star in John Madden's Academy Award®-winning "Shakespeare in Love," winning a SAG Award® as part of the ensemble cast. His subsequent film credits include "Armageddon" and "Pearl Harbor," both directed by Michael Bay; "Forces of Nature"; Ben Younger's "Boiler Room"; Roger Michell's "Changing Lanes"; "The Sum of All Fears"; the screen adaptation of Marvel Comics' "Daredevil"; Kevin Smith's "Jersey Girl"; Kevin Macdonald's "State of Play." Previously, he was seen in the critically acclaimed "Hollywoodland," for which he garnered numerous accolades, including the Venice Film Festival's coveted Golden Lion Award for Best Actor in 2006, and a 2007 Golden Globe nomination. His most recent work includes John Wells' "The Company Men" in which he appeared alongside Tommy Lee Jones and, "The Town," which he co-wrote, directed, and starred in.

Below are a series of useful links on some of Ben's advocacy work.

["Gimme Shelter" Film \(60 seconds, low-resolution\)](#)

[TIME "A Glimmer of Hope in Africa" Feb. 2009](#)

[Nightline interview part 1](#)

[Nightline Interview part 2](#)

[ABC Nightline Story - Ben's African Journey](#)

[ABC Nightline on-line article](#)

[NDI Panel 2008 Democratic National Convention](#)

[Trailer for the film *Reporter*](#)

[CNN Interview with Christiane Amanpour](#)

[NBC Making a Difference](#)